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ArtsWave kicks off its 2022 campaign with an artist streetcar unveiling and traveling art exhibition

CINCINNATI (February 2, 2022) — With the theme of ["BRING YOU: THE POWER OF THE ARTS IS IN OUR HANDS,"](#) ArtsWave, the region's engine for the arts, this morning announced the fundraising goal of its annual community campaign for the arts. The kick-off event at Music Hall also included the unveiling of a second streetcar and launch of a traveling exhibition to underscore the importance of the arts and community fundraising through ArtsWave.

Tim Steigerwald, 2022 Campaign Chair and president and CEO of Messer Construction Co., notes that local arts organizations are still grappling with almost two years of pandemic-related revenue losses totaling over \$140 million. The ArtsWave Campaign, now in its 73rd year, amasses vital donations each year that enable ArtsWave to make 150+ grants that fund the region's arts and fuel community vibrancy. More than 300 businesses and tens of thousands of donors participate in the effort, the largest of its kind in the nation.

Joined by new Cincinnati Mayor Aftab Pureval and campaign Vice Chair Sonya Walton, vice president of economic inclusion at Messer Construction Co., Steigerwald announced a goal for 2022 of \$11.5 million for the arts, a 4% increase from the amount raised in 2021. "This goal is our baseline," he says. "We need everyone who cares about Cincinnati's vitality and quality of life to come together now and help the arts – and our region – rebuild for a bright future." Steigerwald has created [a cabinet of volunteer community leaders](#) to help secure support for the campaign. To jumpstart this year's efforts, Steigerwald has raised \$500,000 from 22 pacesetter gifts. He is calling on the public to match this half-million dollars to create a one-million-dollar boost to the campaign with new or increased contributions over the next three months.

To illustrate the power of the arts as part of today's kick off, Cincinnati Bell CEO and ArtsWave Board Vice Chair Leigh Fox announced and unveiled a new artist-designed wrap for one of the Cincinnati Bell Connector streetcars, in partnership with the City of Cincinnati. Brent Billingsley's artwork entitled WE ARE ALL "HUE-MAN" was the fan favorite among 20 designs submitted in response to ArtsWave's call to artists, garnering 8,000 votes. Billingsley will receive a \$2,500 grant from ArtsWave in recognition of his artistic contributions to the city.

For the streetcar design, Billingsley depicts three-year-old children with different skin colors finding joy in their shared humanity. The work speaks to the importance of the arts in connecting us, despite real or perceived differences. Billingsley is known for often

involving community members and youth, in particular, in the execution of an artistic vision.

The [newly wrapped streetcar](#) was unveiled at the Music Hall station stop for the Cincinnati Bell Connector. Event attendees were able to hop aboard to view a new traveling art exhibition featuring more of Billingsley's work. The exhibition -- the first of its kind for the Cincinnati Bell Connector -- will remain installed in the streetcar through March 4 during normal operating hours.

ArtsWave plans other fun things to engage the community during the 2022 Campaign, including the debut of CincyJams, sponsored by Accenture and taking place at the new Hard Rock Café on May 19. Like ArtsWave's popular Cincy Sings corporate choral competition from past years, Cincy Jams invites musicians from companies and towns across the region to compete in a 'Battle of the Bands'-type concert. More information about this event, plus exciting benefits for individual and corporate donors, can be found on ArtsWave's website along with links to donate.

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About ArtsWave:

ArtsWave, a nonprofit serving the Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky Region, is the engine for the arts. Its roots stem back to the late 1920s when the Cincinnati Taft family provided initial investment matched by community support. In the late 1940s, it evolved to become the first united arts fund in the nation and in the mid-1970s, the first organization to initiate workplace giving for the arts. ArtsWave continues to innovate while leading, as illustrated by its No. 1 rank nationally in community arts fundraising; coordination of a sector-wide Blueprint for Collective Action; piloting of new technologies to maximize arts engagement; and development of resources for the arts. Strong funding for the arts has allowed Cincinnati's arts and culture scene to become a national draw and regional asset, creating a wave of economic and community benefits. Each year, ArtsWave supports the work of over 100 arts organizations, school outreach programs, festivals, community centers, neighborhoods and various collaborations through impact-based grants. ArtsWave has set a goal of \$11.5 million for its 2022 Campaign, an amount necessary for the arts, given the difficult health and economic crisis that has spanned nearly two years, affecting the entire region. Donations can be made at artswave.org/give.

About Artist Brent Billingsley:

Artist Brent Billingsley, is a Behavioral Health Specialist at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, working closely with children to use art forms of all types in helping address challenge in emotions, learning and behavior. Besides his Master's in Social Work from UC and his Bachelor's in Fine Arts from Miami University, Billingsley is a versatile artist whose media of choice is reduction woodblock cutting, yet he also works with ink, acrylics and pastels. Billingsley lives in the Greater Cincinnati Region with his son's Ladonaty Billingsley and Brent Lavelle Billingsley II. More is available on Billingsley at brentbillingsley.com.